

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 09163 241304 Z

45

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

ACDA-19 IO-12 DPW-01 AID-20 NIC-01 EUR-25 RSR-01 /158 W
----- 023475

R 240915 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2111

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 9163

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: TRI QUANG ON THE FUTURE OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: SAIGON 8810

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF AT AN QUANG PAGODA MAY 23, VENERABLE TRI QUANG EXPRESSED EXTREME PESSIMISM OCER THE FATE OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND AVOIDED COMMENT ON CHURCH INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

2. TRI QUANG SAID THAT (A) HE WAS CONVINCED THAT SOONER OR LATER THE NVA WOULD ATTACK IN FORCE AGAIN AND THAT ARVN WOULD THEN BE DEFEATED; (B) THE US REACTION, IF ANY, WOULD BE INADEQUATE TO STOP THE NVA; AND (C) THE US PROBABLY VIEWED
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 09163 241304 Z

THE PARIS AGREEMENT AS PRIMARILY A MEANS OF EXTRICATING ITSELF " WITH HONOR" FROM THE INDOCHINA WAR AND ANTICIPATED BOTH THE IMPRACTICABILITY OF A RECONCILIATION OF THE TWO SIDES AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN EVENTUAL COMMUNIST TRIUMPH. TRI QUANG GAVE NO EXPLICIT REASONS FOR HIS PESSIMISM OTHER THAN TO STATE THAT, EXCEPT FOR A FEW UNITS, THE FIGHTING EFFECTIVENESS OF ARVN REMAINED SO ERODED BY DESERTIONS AND INDIFFERENT MORALE THAT ARVN COULD NOT STAND UP TO AN NVA ATTACK UNDER THE CONDITIONS THAT PREVAIL POST- JANUARY 1973.

3. THE EMBOFF STRONGLY DISAGREED WITH THIS PESSIMISM, ARGUING THAT NO ONE BELIEVED THAT RECONCILIATION AFTER 25 YEARS OF STRUGGLE COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT PATIENT PRESSURES EXERTED OVER CONSIDERABLE TIME. HE STATED THAT THE US BELIEVES THAT, WHILE AN NVA ATTACK CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED COMPLETELY, THE FATE OF SVN WILL BE DECIDED MORE IN THE REALM OF POLITICAL THAN MILITARY STRUGGLE, AND THAT THE GVN HAS THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR SURVIVAL.

AN QUANG- QUOC TU UNITY

4. TRI QUANG GAVE LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE TO RECENT INDICATIONS THAT THERE MIGHT BE A TREND TOWARD GREATER UNITY BETWEEN AN QUANG AND QUOC TU (REFTEL). HE SAID THAT SOME QUOC TU- ASSOCIATED POLITICIANS HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO PROMOTE UNITY WITH AN QUANG IN ORDER TO BENEFIT PERSONALLY FROM AN QUANG POLITICAL STRENGTH. HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY VU QUOC THONG, CHAIRMAN OF THE QUOC TU- ASSOCIATED BUDDHIST SOCIAL- DEMOCRATIC FORCE. TRI QUANG COMMENTED THAT HE WAS NOT OPPOSED TO QUOC TU- AN QUANG UNITY " UNDER THE PROPER CONDITIONS".

INTERNAL PROBLEMS

5. EMBOFF RECALLED THE EMBASSY' S CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH DECEASED VENERABLE THIEN HOA, FORMER HEAD OF THE VIEN HOA DAO, AND COMMENTED ON THE SENSE OF LOSS FELT AT HIS DEATH. WHEN THE EMBOFF WENT ON TO INQUIRE OVER POSSIBLE " PROBLEMS" IN SEEKING A SUCCESSOR TO THIEN HOA, TRI QUANG SHOWED CLEAR RELUCTANCE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. HE SAID PRESS REPORTS WERE INCORRECT AND THAT HE ANTICIPATED NO PROBLEMS BASED ON REGIONAL OR ANY OTHER DIFFICULTIES.

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 09163 241304 Z

AN QUANG DIFFICULTIES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

6. TRI QUANG WAS EQUALLY RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS ANY DIFFICULTIES BEING MET BY THE CHURCH AT THE LOCAL LEVEL OTHER THAN TO REFER GENERALLY TO PRESSURES FROM BOTH THE COMMUNISTS AND THE GVN.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THIEU ADMINISTRATION

7. TRI QUANG CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION THAT HE FELT THAT CONTINUATION OF THE RULE OF PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU WOULD LEAD EVENTUALLY TO DEFEAT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC.

COMMENT

8. THIS MEETING WITH TRI QUANG WAS ARRANGED BY SENATOR BUI TUONG HUAN AT EMBASSY REQUEST. HUAN WAS PRESENT. HUAN LATER TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE HAS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH TRI QUANG BASED ON THE FACT THAT HUAN'S FATHER, AN OFFICIAL IN NVN IN FRENCH TIMES, HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ARRANGING FOR FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BUDDHIST CHURCH CENTRAL ORGANIZATION IN NVN. HUAN SAID HE FIRST MET TRI QUANG IN 1963. AT THE CLOSE OF THE CONVERSATION, TRI QUANG INDICATED THAT, WHILE HE DID NOT SEEK CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS, HE WAS RECEPTIVE TO REQUESTS TO SEE HIM AND RECOMMENDED THAT THESE BE MADE THROUGH SENATOR HUAN.

9. TRI QUANG WAS AFFABLE, FREQUENTLY JOKING AND LAUGHING. HE REMINISCED ABOUT HIS EARLIER CONTACTS WITH A LONG LINE OF EMBASSY OFFICERS, AND PARTICULARLY SINGLED OUT DAVID ENGLE FOR HIS EXCELLENT SPOKEN VIETNAMESE. HE APPEARED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH, BUT SHOWED TRACES OF WHAT COULD BE AN ASTHMATIC CONDITION.
WHITEHOUSE

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NMAFVVZCZ

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: willialc
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON09163
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730553/aaaajspv.tel
Line Count: 146
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: willialc
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Aug-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <09-Oct-2001 by willialc>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 980304
Subject: TRI QUANG ON THE FUTURE OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC
TAGS: PINT, PINT
To: BANGKOK
BIEN HOA
CAN THO
CINCPAC
DANANG
EA
JEC PARIS

NHA TRANG
SECSTATE WASHDC

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005